

**SIXTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE STATES
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE
PROHIBITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT,
PRODUCTION AND STOCKPILING OF
BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN
WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

BWC/CONF.VI/WP.34
28 November 2006

Original: ENGLISH

Geneva, 20 November – 8 December 2006

Item 10 of the agenda

**Review of the operation of the Convention
as provided for in its Article XII**

**REPORT OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (BWC)
REGIONAL WORKSHOPS CO-HOSTED BY
INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA**

Submitted by Australia and Indonesia

1. Indonesia and Australia welcomed the three-year program of work to strengthen the BWC which emerged at the end of 2002, which included national legislation, security and oversight of pathogens and toxins, enhanced capabilities for dealing with disease outbreaks, national and international mechanisms for disease surveillance and codes of conduct for scientists.
2. However, as the BWC three-year program of work proceeded in Geneva between 2003 and 2005, it became clear that a number of smaller States Parties, including some in the Asia-Pacific region, had not been in a position to fully engage in the Geneva process. Further, with increased concerns about WMD-terrorism following the September 11 attacks and the anthrax letters in the US in late 2001, the benefits of full and effective implementation of the BWC in raising the barriers to biological weapons proliferation and bioterrorism were becoming more clearly recognised.
3. Thus arose the idea to bring the ‘Geneva BWC Process’ to our region to enable further exploration and sharing of experiences on the implementation of the BWC from a regional perspective, based on the three-year program of work. To this end, Australia and Indonesia have co-hosted two BWC Regional Workshops.
4. The first Workshop was held in Melbourne in February 2005 under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law (APCML) at the University of Melbourne. In addition to Australia and Indonesia, the other BWC States Parties represented at the Workshop were Brunei, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. Representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Health Organisation also participated.

5. Workshop participants discussed obligations of States Parties under the BWC, different approaches to national implementing legislation, enhanced security of pathogens and toxins, codes of conduct for scientists involved in biological research, biological defence and disease surveillance, detection and combating of infectious diseases, and the role of the BWC in raising the barriers to bioterrorism. It became clear during this Workshop that we are all on a steep learning curve as we grapple with the complexities of how we might raise the barriers to bioterrorism and to prevent the proliferation of biological weapons in ways that do not hamper the growth and sharing of scientific knowledge and the global spread of beneficial advancing technologies.

6. The first workshop was considered to be a very successful means for the participating States Parties to discuss and develop common understandings on the national implementation of the BWC, including those issues identified in the three-year program of work, and a number of follow-on activities were identified. The Proceedings of the Melbourne Workshop have been published and are now regarded as a useful reference document for States Parties which are in the process of reviewing and enhancing the effectiveness of their national implementation of the BWC. The Proceedings of the Melbourne Workshop are available at the following website: <http://www.law.unimelb.edu.au/events/bwc/>.

7. At the second BWC Regional Workshop, held in Bali in March 2006, there were a range of practical presentations on the three main themes of the Workshop: legislative requirements necessary for BWC implementation; national measures to enhance bio-security; and measures for promoting awareness among the scientific community (once again, based on the Geneva-based BWC three year program of work). The benefits of submitting Confidence Building Measures were also discussed. The various presentations were followed by extensive discussions and exchanges of views. These discussions led to the recognition that while all States Parties have the same basic obligations under the BWC, the most useful approach will be for each State Party to develop a 'tailor-made' solution to its national approach to ensure full implementation with the BWC - it is not a case of 'one size fits all'. In these discussions, many participants underscored the importance of fostering further cooperation between States Parties, both regionally and bilaterally.

8. In the final session of the second Workshop, the participants agreed that Australia's Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) and the APCML would further develop the 'Implementation Toolbox' that they have been preparing, to include:

- (i) a checklist of legislation requirements and 'drafting elements' to cover legislative requirement;
- (ii) guidelines to assist in the identification of facilities which should be subject to enhanced security measures, as well as the types of security measures necessary to enhance the security at identified facilities; and
- (iii) guidelines on outreach to relevant scientific communities, including draft codes of conduct for scientists working in the biological sciences and biotechnology.

This 'Implementation Toolbox' is still a work in progress, based on the various contributions and discussions during the regional workshops.

9. The States Parties participating in these workshops consider the Regional Workshop process to have been a valuable mechanism for addressing the objectives of the three-year Program of Work, and reducing the risk of BW proliferation and bioterrorism, and strongly encourage States Parties in other regions to undertake similar workshops in their regions as a means to achieve more effective national implementation of the BWC. To this end, we would be very pleased to share our presentations and other resources with other States Parties that wish to undertake regional workshops.
